

**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny Committee – Economy  
**Date of Meeting:** 10 September 2015  
**Report of:** Victoria Hatfield, Economy & Tourism Manager  
**Title:** Exeter Business Improvement District Update

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Executive

**1. What is the report about?**

1.1 The report updates Members on the Exeter Business Improvement District (BID) and developments with the company since the previous committee report in January 2015.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Scrutiny Committee Economy note and comment on the programme of activity within the Exeter BID Company Business Plan in section 10 of this committee report.

**3. Reasons for the recommendation**

3.1 It is important to maintain an open and honest working relationship with the Exeter BID Company and to have a two way conversation regarding the implementation and delivery of the Business Plan to maintain our competitive advantage over other major towns and cities within the South West.

3.2 It is also important to work together and to provide a focus for a concerted effort to face up to challenges and to secure sufficient resource to be able to take appropriate action to increase the number of visitors to and investment in the city.

**4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources?**

4.1 The City Council contributed £25,000 towards the £50,000 costs for the preparation of the Business Plan and the holding of the ballot. The remaining balance has been met by funds from the business community within the city.

4.2 The City Council's annual liability for the additional levy payment will be approximately £21,000. Provision has been made within relevant budgets to meet the additional BID levy cost.

4.3 There was a cost to Exeter City Council for holding the BID ballot and there is an ongoing cost of the raising of invoices for the BID levy; these costs will be paid by the Exeter BID Company.

**5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 As the billing authority Exeter City Council will collect the BID levy income on behalf of the Exeter BID Company. The Council will be reimbursed the costs of collection and any bad debts from the BID levy. In accordance with BID regulations, a BID Revenue Account will be maintained in order to separately

identify and monitor net BID levy receipts payable to the Exeter BID Company.

- 5.2 The additional BID levy liabilities relating to city centre premises occupied by the Council will be factored into the Council's annual budgets over the 5 year period.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1 None identified.

## **7. Monitoring officer Comments:**

- 7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

## **8. Background**

- 8.1 Members supported the development of a BID for Exeter city centre; previously back in 2011 which was unsuccessful and in 2015. Appendix 1 illustrates the streets located within the BID levy area, which contains 641 businesses.
- 8.2 Following a positive vote in spring 2015, all business premises within the BID area were sent an invoice representing 1% of their rateable value. The BID levy will generate in excess of £480,000 per annum totalling £2.4 million over the five year period of the BID. The vote saw 61% of eligible businesses voting in favour and 65% of rateable value businesses voting in favour. Overall turnout of the 641 businesses was 44%.
- 8.3 Exeter City Council is responsible for invoicing and collecting the BID levy, with the income raised being passed to the Exeter BID Company for the exclusive use of delivering the business plan. Exeter City Council is obliged to use the same powers of enforcement to recover the BID levy as for normal Business Rates payment. Non-payment could result in court action being taken.
- 8.4 An 'Operating Agreement' in relation to the administration of the BID Levy has been drafted by Legal Services and sent to the BID Company for signing, covering the duration of the BID (five years). This agreement sets out in detail the obligations on each party for the collection and management of the BID levy.

## **9. Exeter BID Company**

- 9.1 The Exeter BID Company is a company limited by guarantee with the responsibility for implementing the business plan, ensuring that projects are delivered on time, on budget and to the highest standards.
- 9.2 Since the successful BID vote, the original directors of the company had to stand down, to be replaced by representatives nominated and elected by and from the BID levy payers. New board members have been appointed, with one vacancy remaining representing Guildhall & Lower High Street. This vacancy closed on 10 August, with the successful candidate being announced on 12 August. The BID board comprises of the following:
- seven area representatives from the retail sector

- two representatives from the hospitality sector
- one senior representative from both Devon County and Exeter City Council
- one representative from Exeter Chamber of Commerce

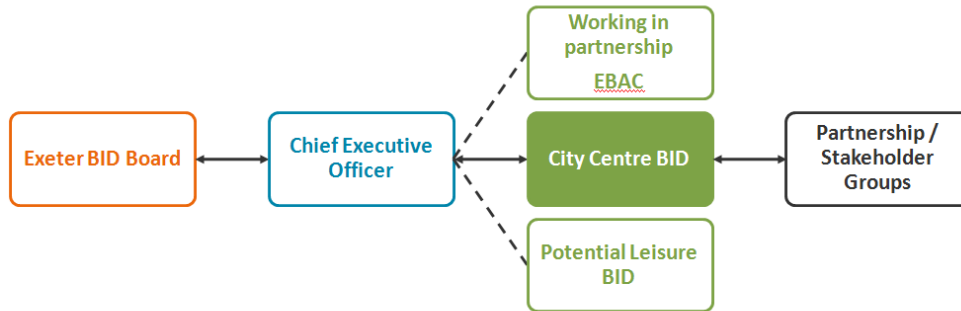
9.3 A full list of Exeter BID Company board directors is as follows, with Wayne Pearce being nominated and voted in as Chair:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Wayne Pearce	Princesshay	Princesshay & Chair
Stephen Auty	Specsavers	High Street
Patrick Cunningham	Exeter Phoenix	Hospitality
David Goodchild	Cavern Club	Hospitality
John-Paul Hedge	Express & Echo	Gandy Street, Harlequins & Queen Street
Mattie Richardson	Bunyip Bead and Buttons	Fore Street
Helen Scholes	Stagecoach South West	Paris Street & Sidwell Street
Ben Barlaba	The LXS Centre Stage	South Street & North Street
Cllr Rosie Denham	Exeter City Council	Exeter City Council
Steve Campion	Exeter College	Exeter Chamber of Commerce
Alasdair Cameron	Exeter Cathedral	Cathedral Green, Cathedral Yard, Cathedral Close & High Street (Cathedral side)
Cllr Andrew Leadbetter	Devon County Council	Devon County Council
Vacant	TBC	Guildhall & Lower High Street

9.4 The Exeter BID Board is responsible for recruiting a Chief Executive for the duration of the BID – 5 years. This role is crucial to the coordination of BID activity, the delivery of the Business Plan and exploring opportunities for cooperating with initiatives outside the area that will enhance the viability of the City offer. Craig Bulley was appointed and started work in this role Monday 27 July 2015. Craig was Town Centre Manager at Barnstaple for over 10 years and holds the position of Club Chairman and Development Manager at Barnstaple Rugby Football Club.

9.5 The Exeter BID Chief Executive will be the first point of contact for day-to-day enquiries relating to the management of the city. He will act as the conduit to all the organisations operating in the city and ensure that there is a 'joined-up' and business-focused approach to all operational and strategic issues affecting the city centre.

9.6 The illustration below shows the structure and flow of the Exeter BID Company:



9.7 The performance of Exeter BID, the delivery of projects and its impact on the city centre will be monitored through a number of measures (but not exclusive to):

- customer satisfaction surveys
- footfall counts
- crime statistics
- media coverage
- website hits & social media tracking

9.8 The management of Exeter BID will be held to account through:

- an annual business survey
- the BID Annual Review, Report and accounts (available to all BID levy payers)
- an AGM - open to all BID levy payers

## 10. Exeter BID Projects

10.1 The Business Plan included baseline statements covering existing services provided by Exeter City Council, Devon County Council and other organisations responsible for services and activities in the city centre. The Business Plan includes proposals to enhance these services funded by the BID levy. BID projects and services will be new or in addition to current services provided and will not be a replacement for them.

10.2 Through consultation with businesses located within the BID area, the business plan was developed and broken down into three themes, as highlighted below.

### 10.2.1 - Marketing & Events:

#### Spread the Word

- A Strategic Marketing Plan – to determine what Exeter stands for and where it sits in the region and beyond
- Coordinated national campaigns and communication – to take Exeter to London, Birmingham and many other cities in the UK and Europe
- A website – to provide a one-stop site providing all the information about Exeter in one place including a directory of all businesses in the BID area
- Social media – deliver a comprehensive social media presence to give timely information about everything that is happening in the city

### **Exciting Exeter**

- Introduce a programme of high-profile events throughout the year, tailored to a theme or area of the city
- Employ an Exeter Welcome Team – a team of uniformed wardens who will act as the city's eyes and ears on the street and welcome and direct Exeter's customers to find those hidden gems as well as the retail core
- Coordinate marketing and promotion of all events and activities
- Provide Christmas lights throughout the BID area
- Co-ordinate Christmas promotions and events in the weeks leading up to Christmas to build footfall atmosphere and excitement in the city
- Take advantage of the Exeter Food Festival and Rugby World Cup links to BID area - to ensure they have relevance across the BID area
- Stretch the shopping day. Increase the opportunity for customers to shop after 5.30pm by providing a comprehensive promotional campaign to support those businesses that want to offer this service
- Introduce an area identity schemes e.g. Fore Street 'Creative & Bohemian', South Street – 'Parties and Celebrations', Gandy Street 'the Hidden Gem', Sidwell Street 'Gateway to the City' etc. To encourage customers to visit those parts of the city that are away from the High Street
- Enhance the Exeter Trails initiative - build on this already successful initiative, grow it and make it sustainable for the independent retail sector in the city

### **10.2.2 – Welcome and Safe:**

#### **Getting into town and finding your way around**

- Introduce a staff discount bus fares monthly / quarterly / annual tickets. The BID team will work with Stagecoach to provide a preferential discount season ticket for staff working within the BID area to help to recruit and retain the best people
- Consider introducing a car parking discount scheme for staff in the BID area. The BID Team will negotiate with Exeter City Council to bring in a limited scheme to offer discounted parking in selected car parks for staff working in the BID area
- Consider introducing a parking redemption scheme for customers to be promoted by the BID on behalf of business. Encourage our customers to stay longer and shop more by offering to contribute to their parking fee
- Introduce a way-marking scheme – to get people to the interesting and quirky side streets full of independent business. Install colourful and themed way-markers for the streets off the main drag that will encourage shoppers to explore

#### **Clean up**

- Coordinate commercial waste disposal services
- Organise a Clean-up scheme with Community Payback Service
- Recruit a Welcome Team – to provide a rapid reporting service for defects and littering

#### **Safe and Secure**

- Establish Purple Flag status within Exeter– The BID will achieve the gold standard of Management for the Night Time Economy: this will give customers the confidence to know that Exeter is a safe place in which to enjoy a night out

- Continue to support Exeter Business Against Crime (EBAC) initiative – grow and develop the radio link scheme for all businesses in the BID area, to provide an effective early warning system to fight crime and share information. The BID will work closely with EBAC to grow membership and to increase the flow of information across the city to tackle and avert crime

### **10.2.3 – Looking After Business:**

#### **Better communication**

- Establish regular networking meetings – Exeter BID will facilitate networking meetings for streets and areas in the BID area so information and good practice can be shared with colleagues
- The BID Welcome Team will be a first point of contact on the streets

#### **Cutting your costs**

- Work to introduce a bulk purchase insurance scheme. Many BIDs across the UK have negotiated bulk purchase deals with insurance providers to secure discounts for BID members. Exeter BID would look to do the same for BID voters in the city
- Work to introduce a waste cardboard initiative — the BID will look to build a scheme to collect waste cardboard for recycling to save businesses commercial waste costs
- Establish an energy saving and cost reduction scheme – the BID will work with established agents in the business of cost saving reductions for energy bills
- Research digital High Street and other training opportunities – to ensure that Exeter businesses can compete on digital platforms
- Provide Welcome Host training for employees in the BID area
- Encourage the adoption of footfall counters to measure success. The BID will install additional cameras to encourage investment, provide evidence of its success and to support its activities

10.3 The Arts & Festivals and Economy & Tourism teams have been in discussions with Exeter BID to develop and implement plans for Rugby World Cup 2015 relating to installing additional official and unofficial (handmade yarn bombing & bunting) city dressing within the BID area, providing street entertainment for match days and the promotion of the city leading up to, during and post Rugby World Cup 2015.

### **11. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

11.1 The Exeter BID Company is a very important partner with the City Council in aiming to improve the economic health of the city centre, to attract more visitors and investment within the city centre supporting employment and the quality of the city centre for the benefit of residents.

### **12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

12.1 The key risk to the BID company is that some businesses will not pay the BID levy. The BID company will then incur legal costs to collect the levy. It is imperative that the newly appointed board directors and BID Chief Executive communicates with all businesses on what projects are being rolled out and the outcomes of these projects.

**13. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults; economy; safety and the environment?**

13.1 The successful BID vote will encourage a stronger city centre maintaining if not improving business success and consequent employment opportunities for young people and others. Improvement to the safety of those using the city centre and to the public realm are important priorities for a successful city centre and feature highly in the Exeter BID Business Plan.

**14. Are there any other options?**

14.1 Due to the successful BID vote, there are no other options.

**Victoria Hatfield, Economy & Tourism Manager**

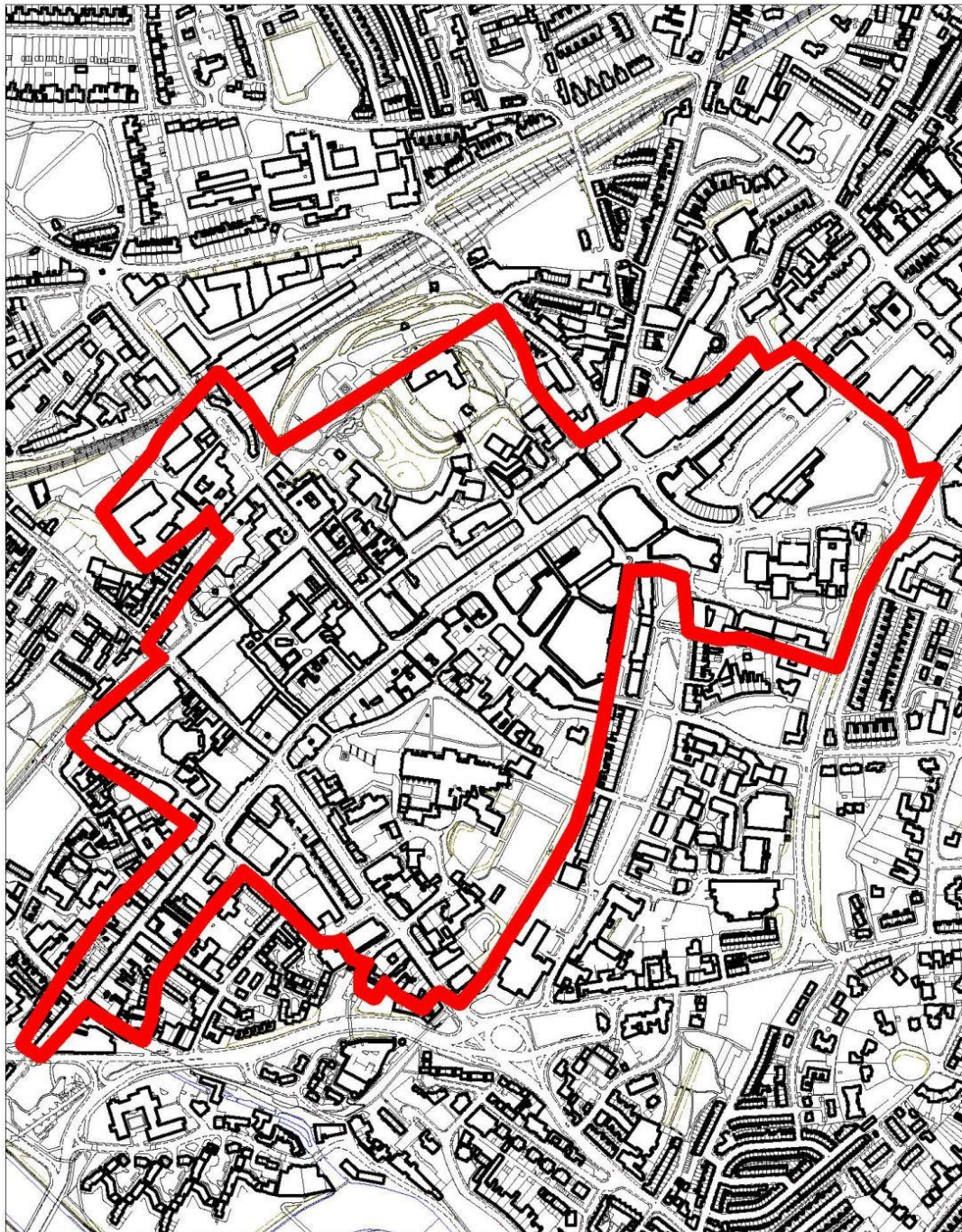
**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

None

Contact for enquires: Sharon Sissons, Democratic Services (Committees), Room 2.3, 01392 265275

APPENDIX 1 - Exeter BID levy area



↑ Exeter Bid Area 2014

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